



Department of Justice

United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott
Eastern District of California

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Wednesday, June 25, 2008
www.usdoj.gov/usao/cae
Docket #: 2:08-cr-00244-LKK

CONTACT: Lauren Horwood
PHONE: (916) 554-2706
lauren.horwood@usdoj.gov

ILLEGAL ALIEN PLEADS GUILTY TO STEALING THOUSANDS IN SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS

SACRAMENTO, Calif.—United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that RAMONA SOTO, a/k/a FELICIANA CORTEZ CASTRO, 74, of Stockton, California, pleaded guilty this afternoon before United States District Judge Lawrence K. Karlton to theft of government property.

This case is the product of an extensive investigation by the Social Security Administration, Office of the Inspector General.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Sean C. Flynn, who is prosecuting the case, SOTO is an undocumented alien who was born in Chihuahua, Mexico in 1934. SOTO crossed the border into California in approximately 1960. At some point prior to 1968, she fraudulently obtained the birth certificate of a United States citizen. Using that birth certificate, on August 2, 1968, SOTO applied for and received a social security card. From at least that point onward, she assumed the fictitious name Feliciana Cortez Castro.

In 2000, SOTO applied for and began receiving benefits from the Social Security Administration to which she was not entitled as an undocumented, illegal alien. Specifically, she applied for and began receiving Social Security benefits, also known as “Title II” benefits that are paid out of the United States Treasury. Between 2000 and 2007, SOTO fraudulently received approximately \$30,400 in Title II benefits.

The theft of government property charges against SOTO carry a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison, a three-year term of supervised release, and a fine of \$250,000. The actual sentence, however, will be determined at the discretion of the court after consideration of the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which take into account a number of variables and any applicable statutory sentencing factors.

#